



# Public Engagement Charter

***Vision Statement:*** *Democracy makes its best decisions when the people express their will and become involved. This charter aims to strengthen democracy, improve communications and spark dialogue in Halton Hills by committing the Town and the public to fundamental principles of public engagement.*

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The Public Engagement Charter is built on three pillars:

- Transparency: the practice of being open, honest and accountable.
- Notification: the act of informing on a particular issue or project.
- Participation: the act of taking part in developing recommendations and/or alternatives for consideration.

## **The Promise of Transparency**

The Town's commitment:

- ✓ To communicate information in clear writing and plain language; recognizing that there are some legal or legislated requirements for specific wording.
- ✓ To state up front, the intent, level of consultation and process for each meeting; i.e. inform, consult or collaborate.
- ✓ To share information in a timely manner in advance of decision-making when possible.
- ✓ To communicate at established intervals about long-term projects.
- ✓ To recognize and communicate about potential issues of interest (e.g. have a bearing on finances, heritage, neighbourhood character).
- ✓ To include special interest groups as part of any public engagement, **and specifically, to offer Indigenous Nations and peoples the opportunity to consult on Town initiatives.**

Engaged citizens will:

- ✓ Acknowledge/recognize the engagement process for projects and staff responsibilities.
- ✓ As appropriate, declare themselves as a group and:
  - Identify the person(s) who will represent the group's interests.
  - Clearly state the role of the group, its interest(s) and position(s) and recommendations.

- Communicate back to their membership.
- Ensure that members who disagree with the group understand they can participate with the Town as individuals.

## **The Promise of Notification**

The Town's commitment:

- ✓ To use clear writing and plain language in notices and advertisements to advise the public as to the relevancy of a particular project, issue or opportunity.
- ✓ To utilize appropriate tools to promote, advise and/or remind residents and members of the public of consultation opportunities.
- ✓ To always meet and exceed, when possible, legislative notification guidelines.
- ✓ To adhere to approved processes for engaging members of Indigenous Nations and peoples as appropriate.
- ✓ To ensure Members of Council are informed and able to respond to questions about emerging issues in their Wards.
- ✓ To utilize the Town's website as the key source for information.
- ✓ To utilize other communications as available and appropriate (e.g. digital and print media) to support accessibility and review for continuous improvement.
- ✓ To inform and educate active participants of results and/or decisions including the rationale and concessions (as applicable) for Council decisions including direct notification.

Engaged citizens will:

- ✓ Seek to be informed about municipal initiatives by visiting the website.
- ✓ Connect with the appropriate staff and/or their Ward Councillor about municipal initiatives.

## **The Promise of Participation:**

The Town's commitment:

- ✓ To respect, encourage and value input from citizens.
- ✓ To provide meaningful opportunities for engagement for all
- ✓ To determine the approach to consultation (e.g., virtual and/or in-person) for each project/issue based on various criterion including but not limited to subject matter, community interest, political environment, and resources.
- ✓ To adhere to approved processes for engaging with members of Indigenous Nations and peoples as appropriate.
- ✓ To state the expectations as to the level of engagement at the start of a project/initiative per the Engagement Matrix.
- ✓ To strive to seek out those stakeholders most impacted and communicate with them throughout the life of a project including face-to-face meetings.

- ✓ To state (as applicable) the role of other orders of government and authoritative bodies e.g., conservation authorities, Ontario Municipal Board.

Engaged citizens will:

- ✓ Be respectful in their communications with staff and elected officials.
- ✓ Connect with the appropriate staff and/or their Ward Councillor for information.
- ✓ Actively connect with the Town by:
  - Referring to the website for topical and timely information
  - Subscribing to various Town tools (online platform, social media, e-newsletters)
  - Attending meetings (Council, Committee or project-specific public meeting)



## Charter Appendix

*This appendix has been developed for the purposes of providing clarity on words and/or roles and responsibilities as referenced in the Public Engagement Charter for the Town of Halton Hills*

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- **Accessible:** Information is made available and easily found through a number of means such as the Town's website, mail-outs, **virtual and in person** public information sessions, Committee and Council agendas and reports. **Information delivery adheres to current AODA standards with alternate formats available upon request.**
- **Active Participants:** People that have demonstrated their interest in the project by joining a project mailing list OR People that have demonstrated more than a passing interest and/or have joined a project mailing list.
- **Decision-making:** The democratic processes and actions undertaken by Council in order to make informed decisions based on the interests of their constituents as well as those of the broader community, and equally based on the professional advice and recommendations provided by the administration.
- **Delegated Authority:** The division of authority and powers moved downwards to staff and special committees. Delegation is about entrusting someone else to act on Council's behalf.
- **Emerging Issues:** A central point that has arisen and been identified as integral to the discussion.
- **Engagement Matrix:** This refers to the three levels of public engagement; from inform to consult to collaborate (the highest level of engagement with the Town). Projects may involve one or more levels of public engagement.
- **The Planning Act:** The Planning Act is provincial legislation that sets out the ground rules for land use planning in Ontario, describes how land uses may be controlled, and who may control them.

- Public Information Centre (PIC):** A Public Information Centre (PIC) is a community engagement forum used by the Town to answer resident questions and receive comments and concerns from the public regarding development proposals, planning studies, public works projects or the design of community parks. PICs can occur in different forms such as formal **in person or virtual** presentations by Town staff, open house sessions with panel display information or round-table workshop/visioning exercises. For an Environmental Assessment (EA) project at least one Public Information Centre is required to be held. For any project or study considered under the Planning Act a PIC would be held separate from the statutory Public Meeting if deemed necessary by the Town.
- Public Meeting:** In the context of a planning application or study requiring public engagement, refers to the Statutory Public Meeting as mandated by the Planning Act; the meeting is held before Council, open to the public and residents are provided an opportunity to comment on the application or study. ‘Public meeting’ may also refer to non-statutory meetings that are open to the public.
- Role of Town Council:** To represent constituents and the community, consider and make decisions on matters important to the municipality, set the direction and policies for the municipality which provide direction for the long-term health and welfare of the Town; through the role of a representative, policy-maker and steward of the municipality.
- Role of Town Administration:** To provide objective, professional advice to Council, in accordance with all legislative requirements of various Acts and applicable laws; to implement Council's decisions according to Town policies, standards and principles of effective public service; and to manage people and resources to achieve Council’s vision.
- Secondary Plan:** Secondary plans are part of the Town’s Official Plan. The Official Plan is a broad policy document that serves as the basis for making land use decisions and managing change across the Town. The purpose of any Secondary Plan is to establish a more detailed development concept for infrastructure and land use for smaller or more specific areas of the Town, such as new communities or the redevelopment of some existing communities. These plans use a combination of text, maps and graphics to provide more detail on things like land use, community design, natural heritage, roads and parks.
- Timely:** To be consistent with legislative/mandated standards and exceed them where possible.
- Town:** ‘Town’ refers to the Corporation of the Town of Halton Hills; a legal entity for which commitments are carried out by its administration (employees) and/or elected officials.

## PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT MATRIX

A tool to support understanding of how the Town meets the principles of the Public Engagement Charter.			
Spectrum of engagement	INFORM	CONSULT	COLLABORATE
<b>Purpose</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Communicate; share information to build awareness</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Listen and learn; test ideas and concepts and develop recommendations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Actively participate; to partner to develop alternatives and/or recommendations</li> </ul>
<b>Town's responsibility</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide information including advising on applicable legislation that dictates process.</li> <li>Share final decision</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide information</li> <li>Provide opportunity for public to share views, values and priorities.</li> <li>Consider how recommendations could be incorporated</li> <li>Share final decision</li> <li>Report back on final decision</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide information</li> <li>Provide opportunity for public to share views, values and priorities.</li> <li>Provide opportunity to influence where there are alternatives within a project that have been identified for discussion and fall within the scope of legislation.</li> <li>Consider how recommendations could be incorporated</li> <li>Share final decision</li> <li>Report back on final decision</li> </ul>
<b>Public's responsibility</b>	Learn	Participate	Partner